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Massive erosion in Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon creates the most extensive damage in more than ten years

Bonneville Power Administration

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WALLA WALLA, Wash. — Extreme erosion damage this year will keep workers from The Bonneville Power Administration's regional office in Walla Walla scrambling to restore roads and structures through this fall. The damage is the worst the agency has seen in the area for more than a decade, according to BPA Regional Manager Truman Conn.

"Restoring access to transmission lines and shoring up major support structures

are definitely our highest priorities this summer," Conn said. "We'll be able to get even more projects underway as the mountain snowpack melts."

BPA must have good access to transmission lines and equipment since they deliver power to millions of consumers throughout the Northwest. When an outage occurs, BPA must react quickly to repair damage. These kinds of proactive efforts have helped BPA reduce its overall duration of outages.

Increased stream flows and water run-off this year have re-directed channels and created slides throughout the area that includes the cities of Walla Walla, the Tri-Cities, and Yakima, Wash.; and Pendleton, Hermiston and La Grande, Ore. In mid-April, BPA teamed with the Natural Resource Conservation Service to spread thousands of pounds of grass seed in an area around Walla Walla. This measure should help stabilize the soil.

BPA's access roads experienced the most damage from erosion this winter and spring, but many guy wires supporting transmission towers also need to be repaired, and at least one tower on Satus Pass outside of Goldendale, Wash., needs to be fully relocated.

Conn estimates that of the 7,000 miles of transmission lines he oversees, 100 miles currently are inaccessible because of erosion damage to access roads. It will take about \$100,000 to repair the damage.

"These roads aren't highly developed, they're primitive," Conn said. "So \$100,000 goes a long way in fixing them."

The BPA crews have been working mostly in the lower hills and valleys this spring and early summer, but as warmer weather moves in and the snow melts, the crews will work up to higher ground. In addition to fixing problems caused by erosion, the crews will be performing routine maintenance to

substations and other system components this summer — in preparation for the next go-around with Mother Nature.

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